

CITY OF MIAMI BEACH
Office of the City Manager
Letter to Commission No. 060-2005



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To: Mayor David Dermer and
Members of the City Commission

Date: March 3, 2005

From: Jorge M. Gonzalez
City Manager

Subject: Update Report on Homeless Outreach Services

This memorandum is prepared as a status report on the progress of homeless outreach efforts by the Neighborhood Services Department, Office of Community Services.

Background

In the fall of 2003, the Mayor and Commission authorized a significant increase in funding and resources to the Office of Community Services for its homeless outreach program. This funding enabled:

- The acquisition of a total of 41 beds (10 at Miami Rescue Mission, 31 at The Salvation Army)
- The addition of a second, contracted outreach team (3 staffers)
- Relocation services (for those homeless persons seeking to return to a supportive environment elsewhere in the country)
- The acquisition of identification and work documents for homeless persons seeking to reintegrate into mainstream society

Population Served

The Office provides homeless prevention and intervention services to individuals and families as defined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development as meeting one of the following criteria:

- ◆ Living in a place not meant for human habitation, i.e. street, car, parks, abandoned building, bus station, etc.
- ◆ Living in an emergency shelter.
- ◆ Living in transitional or supportive housing (for people coming from the streets or shelter)
- ◆ Living in either a place not meant for human habitation, an emergency shelter, or transitional or supportive housing, but currently in a hospital or institution on a short-term (30 days or less)
- ◆ Being evicted within a week from a private dwelling (and have a certified, legally-binding eviction notice) **and** have no subsequent residence identified **and** no resources and support networks to obtain housing.
- ◆ Being discharged within a week from an institution (prison, hospital, foster care, etc.) having stayed long-term (31 or more days) and housing is not being provided as part of the person's discharge planning **and** have no subsequent residence identified **and** no resources and support networks to obtain housing.
- ◆ Victim of domestic abuse **and** no subsequent residence has been defined **and** no resources and support networks to obtain housing.

The 2005 Point-in-Time Homeless Survey results for our City provide a good snapshot of our homeless and their particular needs. This survey, conducted annually throughout the county, provides a planning tool for homeless service providers by recognizing the specific attributes of our homeless population as self-reported by homeless persons. The survey is administered to homeless people living on the streets once a year via the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust and, this year, was held on the same day as the Homeless Census. The information collected through this survey is presented as part of the documentation for federal funds to combat homelessness in our county.

Chronically Homeless	58%
Persons Experiencing Substance Abuse Issues	56%
Persons with Co-Occurring Disorders	32%
Veterans	25%
Persons with Self-reported Mental Illness	23%

The Point-in-Time Survey also enables homeless persons to prioritize their needs. The following chart documents the self-identified priorities of our City's homeless population.

Need	Priority Ranking
Food or meals	1
Clothing assistance	2
Permanent housing	3
Health care	4
Financial assistance	4
Emergency Housing	4
Job Placement	7
Alcohol/drug treatment	8
Education/job training	9
Transitional housing	10
Drop-in center	10

Twice each year, the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust oversees the Homeless Census, a county-wide counting of homeless persons. According to these official numbers, the number of homeless persons in our City has been declining steadily since the homeless initiative began in October 2003. The chart below documents our gradual but consistent decrease of 38 percent in less than two years. To place this decrease in context, the City of Miami, a municipality that has four times the resident population as our City as well as direct and unencumbered access to providers throughout the County's Continuum of Care, has expended more resources to achieve a similar reduction.

Date of Census Count	Homeless Count
April 2003	384
November 2003	304
April 2004	259
January 2005*	239

* Rescheduled from November 2004

It is important to stress that several factors make Miami Beach a regional destination for homeless people including its plentiful beaches, restaurants and cash-rich visitors. It is also important to note that spikes in homelessness tend to coincide with the weather, i.e. cold weather will increase the number of homeless visiting our City.

Progress Made

Our goal is to end homelessness in our City through collaboration with community-based providers and utilizing the Continuum of Care framework as a means to access services and permanent housing for homeless individuals.

The Office tracks the number of people it serves through client contacts. Client contacts are those exchanges between staff and clients in which either the offer of services is made and is refused or actual services are being provided. Due to our chronic population, these numbers reflect multiple contacts with the same clients. The following chart documents client contacts since FY 02/03.

FY 2002/2003*	FY 2003/2004	FY 2004/2005**
1,234	4,495	954

* Represents only the data accumulated since May 2003 when current administration assumed management.

** Represents October 2004 – through December 2004 only.

Once contact has been made and shelter services are accepted, clients are placed in either the Miami Rescue Mission or The Salvation Army. Shelter placements are the first step in client stabilization. During this time, clients are assessed and the process of establishing a service plan towards permanent housing commences through joint effort between client, the Office and the shelter. This is the beginning of an extensive case management process that monitors and supports the client's progress through the Continuum leading to independence. This process can last up to a year and typically, includes:

- Ensuring clients have appropriate identification and work documents
- Applying for appropriate entitlements (i.e. disability, Medicaid, food stamps, etc.)
- Medical screening (including tuberculosis test)
- Search and obtainment of employment
- Access to support services (counseling, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc.)

The following chart documents shelter placements.

	FY 2002/2003	FY 2003/2004	FY 2004/2005
October	*	55	38
November	*	36	44
December	*	75	30
January	*	58	
February	*	27	
March	*	57	
April	*	42	
May	43	38	
June	50	67	
July	23	36	
August	36	40	
September	79	37	
TOTALS	231	568	112**

* Data unavailable.

** Represents only the first quarter of current fiscal year.

It is important to note that all placements documented since October 2003 are not duplicated. While maintaining capacity- or close-to-capacity caseloads on a daily basis, the Office has placed 680

people in shelter since October 2003. This number is significant as it is roughly 2.8 times the amount of people officially accounted for in the latest Homeless Census and underscores our City's position as a regional destination for homeless persons.

The Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust considers shelter placements of seven or more days to be a standard in measuring placement success. While the City is home to many chronically homeless individuals, the Office has significantly increased the number of shelter placements greater than seven days and thereby eliminating the revolving door to shelter. Since April 2003, 34.15 percent of all placements have been for seven or more days.

The ultimate measure of ending homelessness is ensuring that previously homeless clients access and maintain permanent housing. Through concerted case management efforts that support and guide a client through the Continuum of Care, the Office has successfully placed 60 people in permanent housing since October 2003 or an average of four people per month. These numbers only reflect those clients that we are able to track because of direct placements to housing. It does not reflect those people who entered other stages of the Continuum for service and we are therefore unable to track independently. Unfortunately, some people entering the Continuum return to the streets because of mental health and addiction problems. These people re-enter our system only if they return for services or are contacted by outreach methods.

While some homeless people choose to live in our area, others will opt to use our relocation services to reunite with families or friends elsewhere. Since October 16, 2003 through December 2004, the **Office has provided relocation services to 350 people**. In addition to bus tickets, clients were provided with sufficient meals to cover the duration of their travel. Staff accompanies the clients to the bus depot and supervises their boarding and departure.

In conjunction with the Miami Coalition for the Homeless and Miami Rescue Mission, the Office provided a special outreach initiative in January 2005 that targeted chronic homeless persons in our City. The initiative, held every Sunday in January, provided transportation to the Mission, a hot meal, shower, change of clothes and recreational activities. Through this effort, chronically homeless individuals who tend to be resistant to traditional approaches were able to experience intervention in a non-threatening manner in hopes of eventually accepting permanent help. Forty-eight people were served through this initiative funded by the Miami Coalition for the Homeless.

With the recent issuance of a Request For Applications (RFA) by the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust that will award a contract to coordinate county-wide outreach for chronically homeless individuals, the Office expects to collaborate with the awarded entity to target the 168 chronically homeless individuals identified in our City. With a focus on mental health services, this collaboration will utilize mental health practitioners (in addition to City staff) as outreach personnel and will enable the City to tap into mental health and substance abuse providers throughout the county. In addition, it is expected that, as a condition of participating in the county-wide Memorandum Of Understanding for this RFA, existing City staff will receive specialized training to better-improve our outreach efforts to the chronically homeless.

In short, the City's homeless efforts have achieved a significant reduction in permanent homelessness, relocated 350 people to other supported environments, and established streamlined processes to improve outreach, accessibility and accountability to those needing services.

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